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ABSTRACT

Cooperative learning is a teaching strategy that promotes the positive interaction of children in small, heterogeneous groups. Each group contain three or four students of varying achievement levels, backgrounds, socio-economic status, and sex. Cooperative learning processes promote student motivation, build group skills, foster social and academic interaction among students, and reward successful group participation. In cooperative learning teams, low achieving students can feel successful by making positive contributions to the group. Cooperative learning is relatively easy to implement and is not expensive. When used appropriately, it improves student behavior and attendance, and increases positive attitudes toward peers and school. Success is more likely when the teacher devotes some time to building a classroom climate conducive to cooperation and mutual respect. This can be done using short, high interest activities with a high probability of student success as "group builders." Four examples of geographic group building activities are given. Once the groups are formed, cooperative learning projects can be designed to meet the needs of a particular group of students. The material should be organized to encourage students to work together, but individual accountability also should be maintained. The teacher should teach the skills necessary for effective group work. Four examples of cooperative projects are presented. A list of eight references is included, and three sources for geographical group builders are noted. (JB)

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TEACHING GEOGRAPHY USING COOPERATIVE LEARNING

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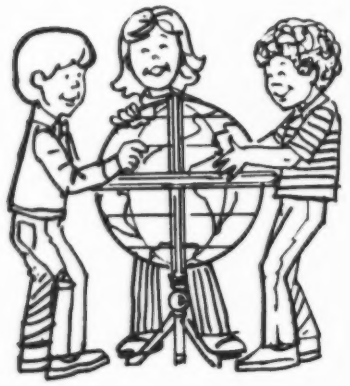

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Why Use Cooperative Learning?

According to Newsweek magazine, ". . . young Americans, like their predecessors, may still lust after adventurous trips to exotic places, but now don't have a clue how to find them on a map." A survey released by Gilbert Grosvenor of the National Geographic Society and conducted by the Gallup organization showed Americans 18 to 24 years old finishing last in geographic knowledge when compared with other industrialized countries sampled (Leslie, 1988). The use of cooperative learning, a proven technique for increasing academic achievement and promoting positive student attitudes, may help teachers concerned with improving the geographic literacy of their students.

William Glasser has noted that student motivation to work in any subject area is dependent on the extent to which the basic needs of students are met. (Glasser, 1986) Traditional teaching, which has emphasized individual student achievement, has also resulted in the isolation of many students (Foyle and Lyman, 1989).

Cooperative learning is a teaching strategy that promotes the positive interaction of children in small groups. Instead of working alone, or in groups with children of similar ability, students are grouped by the teacher in heterogeneous groups. Three or four students per group works well. Each group contains students of different achievement level, backgrounds, status, and sex.

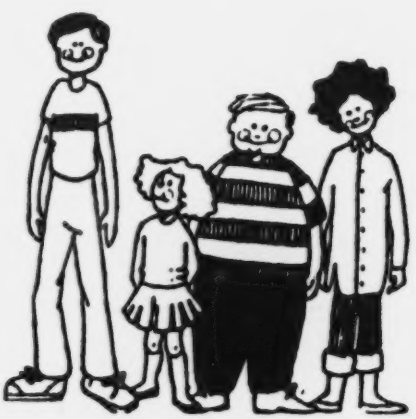
Cooperative learning processes promote student motivation, build group skills, fosters social and academic interaction among students, and rewards successful group participation (Lyman and Foyle, 1988). Cooperative learning also encourages the success of students at every academic level. In cooperative learning teams, low achieving students can feel successful by making positive contributions to the group. Students also benefit from sharing ideas and reviewing material with other students (Featherstone, 1986).

Cooperative learning is relatively easy to implement and is not expensive. It has been extensively researched and shown, when used appropriately, to improve student behavior and attendance, to increase liking of peers, and to increase liking of school. Appropriate use of cooperative learning can also improve student academic achievement (Slavin 1987 and 1988).

Johnson and Johnson (1984) advocate the use of teacher-identified roles to facilitate group interaction. Well designed cooperative roles promote positive group interedependence while maintaining individual student accountability for learning the material. To work successfully in a cooperative learning group, students must master not only the material, but learn the interpersonal skills needed for successful participation in a group.

While the benefits of cooperative learning are well documented, Foyle and Lyman (1989) believe that the benefits are more likely to occur when the teacher has devoted some time to building a classroom climate conducive to cooperation and mutual respect. Students have often had little opportunity to cooperate with students of different social, ethnic, and economic background. Further, students are often reluctant to associate with students they feel are more able or less able academically than they are. Because of these factors, and because group participation skills must be taught to students, it is important to begin the cooperative learning process by using "group builders".

Foyle and Lyman (1989) define group builders as activities which promote positive interaction among students, which offer high probability of student success, and which build interest in the content being studied. Possible sources for group builders can be found in Appendix 1. Examples of other group builders follow.



Geographical Group Builders

Successful implementation of cooperative learning to teach geography depends, to a great extent, on the climate of the classroom. It is recommended that short, high interest activities be used to build student interest in geography and to promote positive interaction between students in learning groups. This group building should take place before longer cooperative activities are used. Group builders can also be used periodically throughout the study of geography to build group cohesiveness and promote student interest in geography. Any short puzzle activity with a high probability of student success can be adapted into a group building activity. Sample group building activities follow.

Group Bulletin Board

This activity requires a large world map that can be displayed on a classroom bulletin board. Students are asked to think of places they have been, places where relatives or friends live, or places they are interested in. The goal is for each student to have a different place marked on the map. Each students place is marked with a small notation such as:

"Eddie was born here."
"Jennifer's grandmother lives here."
"Bob's family took a vacation here."
"Melissa's favorite book took place here."

A list of the places chosen by each student can be provided to students and atlas activities to be completed in cooperative groups can be designed using the places chosen. Sample activities using an atlas:

1. Directions (What direction would you travel from Jennifer's grandmothers' house to the place where Melissa's favorite book took place? What direction did Bob's family travel from our town to Bob's special place?)

2. Mileage (Which special place is closest to our town? Which is farthest? How many miles from where Eddie was born to where Bob's family took their vacation?)

3. Climates (Which special places would have a dry, warm climate? Which places would have snow in the winter?)

4. Geographical features (Which special places are near an ocean? Which places are near mountains?)

Puzzler

The following puzzle can be written on the chalkboard. Student teams are given a week to think of solutions in their spare time. When they think they have a correct solution, they can write their answer and put it in a box designated by the teacher. At the end of the week, the box is opened and correct answers are rewarded.

What do these states have in common?

Vermont
Virginia
New York
Kentucky
Illinois
Pennsylvania

Answer # 1: All of these states are also the names of places on a Monopoly board.

Answer # 2: All of these states were birthplaces of one or more U. S. presidents.

Note: Many other correct answers are possible. For example, all states are located east of the Mississippi River. Each state has mountains and rivers.

Geographical Songs

This activity can be used to encourage parent participation. Students are given a list of songs with place names in the title. The place names are omitted. Each team member is encouraged to ask parents, grandparents, friends, etc. for assistance. The team attempts to find answers to all the song titles.

Chattanooga Choo-Choo
I Left My Heart in San Francisco
Yellow Rose of Texas
Moon over Miami
My Old Kentucky Home
The Night the Lights Went Out in Georgia
April in Paris
Do You Know the Way to San Jose?
Moonlight in Vermont
Way Down Yonder in New Orleans
Blue Hawaii
Tijuana Taxi

Other possibilities can be suggested by students:
Beautiful Ohio, Hotel California, Tennessee Waltz

State Capitals

Students are given a list of state capitals. In teams, they attempt to find capitals which meet the criteria given.

three words	Salt Lake City
two words	Carson City, Des Moines, St. Paul, Jefferson City, Oklahoma City, Baton Rouge, Little Rock, Santa Fe
same letter	Atlanta, Augusta
President name	Madison, Jefferson City, Jackson, Lincoln
month of year	Juneau, Augusta
name of state	Oklahoma City, Indianapolis
city	Oklahoma City, Jefferson City, Carson City, Salt Lake City
name of saint	St. Paul
name of early explorer	Columbus, Columbia, Raleigh
boy's name	St. Paul, Augusta, Austin, Charleston, Jefferson City
girl's name	Annapolis, Honolulu, Helena, Olympia, Juneau, Raleigh

Cooperative Learning Projects

Cooperative learning projects can be designed to meet the needs of a particular group of students. Each cooperative learning activity should have these five characteristics:

1. The material is organized to encourage students to work together.

2. The teacher should designate student groups which have students of different backgrounds and levels of achievement.

3. Individual accountability should be maintained by measuring the progress of individual students.

4. A group reward for working together effectively should be provided. Group grading should not be used.

5. The teacher should teach the skills necessary to work together effectively in groups.

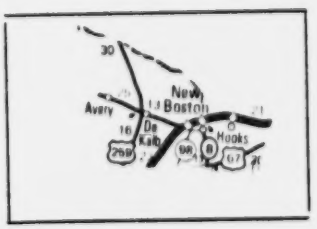
Cooperative Project 1

Map Kit

A standard road map can provide hours of instruction for your students. A map kit can be made for a state, region, or country. The teacher (or students) cut a road map into pieces which have clues as to the area in which the piece is located. In groups, students will name the county (for a state) or the state (for a region or for the United States). States can be named for a map kit of Mexico, provinces for a map kit of Canada.

Objective: Students will apply geographical skills to locate given pieces of a map.

Example: Name the state in which this map piece is located.



Cooperative Project 2

State Study

Student interest in geography can be built at the same time students are learning important geographical concepts and cooperative skills. Map activities based on the students' state can be developed which (1) increase the students' knowledge of their state or region, (2) allow students to practice their map skills, (3) permit students to apply geographical concepts learned to practical situations, and (4) facilitate cooperative interaction between students when the map activities are worked on in heterogeneous groups.

Questions for the map activities can be suggested by students in the class. Questions may include:

1. What are the time zones in our state?
2. What time zone covers most of our state?
3. Name the time zone in which you would find given cities in our state.
4. Use the scale of miles on the map to measure the distance between given cities in our state.
5. Name the interstate or state highway that goes through given cities in our state.
6. Name the direction you would travel to go to a given city in our state from another given city in our state.
7. Locate given bodies of water in our state.
8. Locate cities in our state that were named for U. S. presidents.
9. Locate cities in our state that have the names of boys or girls.
10. Locate cities in our state that have the word "city" in their names.
11. Locate cities in our state that have the names of trees or plants in them.
12. Locate cities in our state that have animals in their names.
13. Locate cities in our state that have colors in their names.
14. Locate the highest and lowest elevations in our state.
15. Locate cities in our state that have other interesting names. (the name of a car, the name of a country, etc.)

Cooperative Project 3

Community Study

Objectives: Students will identify characteristics of a city.
Students will find characteristics of a city in their own community.

A city is a place where people live, work, and play. The people of a city have many needs, and a city provides services to meet those needs. Every city has a past, a present, and a future.

After students have been taught or have brainstormed the following generalizations about a city, a group investigation can be conducted. Six groups are formed as follows:

Group 1--A city is a place where people live. The group reports on types of housing available in the city, different kinds of neighborhoods, why people would choose to live in the city.

Group 2--A city is a place where people work. The group reports on major industries and kinds of occupations available in the city.

Group 3--A city is a place where people play. The group reports on recreational opportunities in the community. What do people do for fun?

Group 4--A city has a past. The group reports on the history of the city. Why did people settle there? Who were the historical figures in the city's history? What interesting historical events occurred in the city?

Group 5--A city has a present. What projects are underway in the city? What interesting things occur in the city? How is the city changing and improving?

Group 6--A city has a future. How could the city change in the future? What industries and

occupations are likely to decline? Which are likely to grow?

Each group is given a general topic to work on. The group brainstorms subtopics related to their general topics and decides what information will be covered and who will gather the information. Possible sources of information include: chamber of commerce materials, materials from local businesses, city recreation guides, city maps, interviews with local officials, newspaper articles. Possible reporting methods include: photographs, written reports, collages, student made advertisements for the city, slide shows.

Follow-up Test

Following the group reports, a test can be given to measure individual learning.

1. Name three or more needs that people have that can be met by the community they live in.

2. Name three ways our city helps people have a good place to work and to make a living.

3. Name one or more places in or around our city where people could learn about the past.

4. Name two or more ways our city gives people chances to have fun.

4. In order to keep growing and to have new people move to a city, what does a city have to do?

Careers and Services Name

Put a check in the correct box below to show whether a particular job could be found in Junction City, if you would have to work outside Junction City but still in Kansas, or if the job could only be done outside of Kansas.

Occupation	Could Work in in Junction City	Could Work in Kansas	Would Have to Work in another part of the United States
Policemen and firemen			
Lawyers			
Astronauts			
Automobile Mechanics			
College Teachers			
Movie Stars			
Elementary School Teachers			
Professional Football Players			
Farmers			
Doctors and Dentists			

Suppose you had enough money to open a business in the Junction City area. Which businesses below would be good ones for this area?

Business	Good Business for Junction City area	Better Elsewhere
Swimming Pool Cleaning Service		
Lawn Planting and Maintenance Service		
Supply Store for Deep Sea Divers		
Mountain Climbing Supply Store		
Movie Theater		
Fast Food Restaurant		
Fishing and Hunting Supply Store		

Cooperative Project 4

Possible Group Roles for a Social Science Report

The following roles may be assigned to members of groups completing reports on states or countries.

1. Facts writer--writes, tells, or tape records the major facts about the country or state

2. Economics expert--writes, tells, or tape records information about the products, industries, agriculture of the state or country

3. Weatherperson--writes, tells, or tape records information about the climate of the country or state

4. Historian--writes, tells, or tape records information about important historical events of the state or country

5. Government expert--writes, tells, or tape records information about the government of the state or country

6. Biographer--writes, tells, or tape records information about the important people associated with the state or country

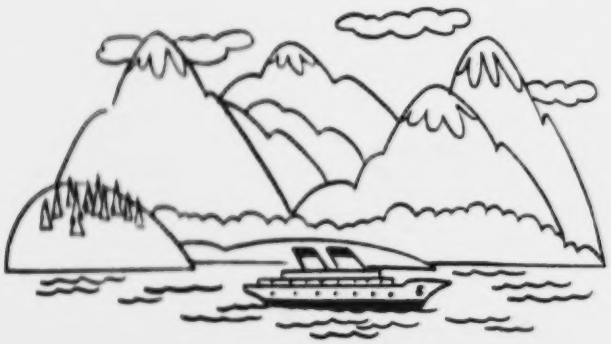
7. Geographer--writes, tells, or tape records information about the geographical features of the country or state

8. Travel guide--writes, tells, or tape records information about the interesting places to visit in the country or state

9. Illustrator--draws the flag, seal, and other important information which can be illustrated about the state or country

10. Brochure designer--designs a travel brochure about the state or country

11. Advertiser--prepares a commercial about the state or country



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APPENDIX 1

Sources for Geographical Group Builders

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